

BIG Tucker

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Charlotte Maria Tucker

(A. L. O. E.)

Authoress—Missionary.

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WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF THE  
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(A. L. O. E.)

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By MRS. J. T. GRACEY.

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A "PRINCESS in Israel" was Charlotte Maria Tucker, who died in the city of Amritsir, Northern India, Dec. 2, 1893. There are souls developed by watching and waiting, or abiding God's time. Thus did Miss Tucker, and demonstrated what great things God will do *for* a woman, and *with* a woman, who is wholly given up to his service.

She was born in England in the year 1821, and came of the best English blood. Her father was Mr. Henry St. George Tucker, who for a period of more than fifty years filled important positions under the English government, and was at one time a director of the East India Company. Her early life was spent in the quiet and retirement of her home, which was one of elegance and refinement, surrounded by all that wealth and social position could give. From childhood she breathed a religious and missionary atmosphere.

Her spirit was vivacious, buoyant, sympathetic; her features fine, her face attractive in its winning smile, her intellect brilliant. As years advanced, she developed a life of ceaseless Christian activity. To study such a life, to catch some of its music,

to understand its heart-throbs, and to comprehend its record of love, patience, and hope, is to get an inspiration.

Miss Tucker's life covered three distinct periods, her home life, her literary life, and her missionary life, while her spiritual life enveloped the whole. She early developed literary powers, and speedily won distinction as a writer for young people. Her books are found in Sunday-school libraries and on drawing-room tables, not only in England, but over the whole English-speaking world, and so helpful were her stories, so charming her style, that the *nom de plume* of A. L. O. E., or a Lady of England, became as familiar in the households of this country as in her native land. It seems marvellous that she could write so much and write it all so well. I have before me a list of one hundred books, with quaint and suggestive titles, all issued by one firm in London. She wrote because she loved to write, and had an intense desire to do good, while sweet and holy lessons filled every page. In addition to her books, Miss Tucker edited *The Christian Juvenile Instructor* for many years, and contributed to many magazines. She delighted in metaphor and parable, and her writings in these particular characteristics are unique, while her allegories are perhaps unequalled.

In the year 1857 she met with a great sorrow in the death of a beloved brother, Robert Tudor Tucker, who was murdered in the dreadful Indian mutiny that brought sorrow and desolation to so

many English homes. She took to her home and heart the children of this brother. Then came the death of her beloved mother, the breaking up of the dear old home, so full of blessed associations, the lingering illness of a sister, and a combination of trials which put to test her Christian confidence.

Notwithstanding the pressure thus put upon her, she continued to write for the press with unabated vigor, and every year several new volumes were added to the list of publications. But she never was too much engrossed with her own duties to attend to others who needed help, and was ever ready to lay down her pen, and turn her thoughts from her manuscript to amuse or profit others, and give loving counsel and sympathy.

Miss Tucker from a child had been interested in missionary work in India, possibly because of her official relations to the government of several members of the family, and had longed for the opportunity to engage in it herself, but she accepted with true loyalty the duties pressed upon her at home, waiting patiently until 1875, when she was fifty-four years old, an age when most persons are thinking of retiring from work altogether, when she was permitted to carry out the cherished plans of a lifetime, and become a missionary to the heathen.

She went out as an honorary missionary of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society at her own expense, and gave her fortune to carry on the work; and so bravely and persistently did she fill out the days and years, that she never had time

to return home, for during the eighteen years no inducements of relatives or friends sufficed to take her back to England even for a short visit. She had a realizing sense that her time was short and she must crowd into it all that was possible. When England gave Miss Tucker to India it gave the very best it had. Her field of labor at first was Amritsir, in the Punjab, where she lived for nearly two years, when a new station was opened at Batala, twenty-four miles distant, where she settled down and remained during the rest of her life. When she first arrived, one who welcomed her wrote : " She came to us early one bright morning, and instantly our hearts went out to her. Her soft gray hair drawn smoothly away from a fine brow, her clear eyes so full of intelligence, and the frank sweet smile playing over her features made hers a very attractive face. How thoughtful she was for the comfort of others ; how keenly she appreciated what was beautiful and good around her. On the day after her arrival she took her place among the native Christians in the Mission Chapel." Thus commenced her missionary life of ceaseless activity and usefulness. Even before going to India she studied the language of the Punjab. It was no easy task for a fragile, delicately nurtured woman at her age to learn and become familiar with a foreign tongue, but this effort was small in comparison to that of going into the homes amongst bigoted and ignorant women, which took her not only into the zenanas of Batala, but to the women of

the surrounding towns and villages. She was identified with the High School for boys at Batala, but pre-eminently her gifts of mind, her strength, her means, and her love were consecrated to the service of India's women.

She had marvellous tact in winning her way, and was fruitful in expedients in getting the attention of the women to her story. She would seat herself on the floor with true oriental ease and grace, gather the occupants around her, who were curious for any variety in their monotonous lives. But the welcome extended her was not always of the warmest character. Often her heart was saddened by the stupidity and indifference of those whom she longed to help, and she was in heaviness often through manifold disappointments. While pursuing her Christ-like work, this devoted Christian woman was frequently turned away from the houses by insolent men, spit upon, threatened with broken crockery, and received much discourteous treatment. "It was a pathetic sight," says one, "to see this cultured woman, no longer young, standing in some lane or street, singing some Christian song in sweetest tones, that some word might be heard, or some echo awakened in the hearts of those to whom she was refused admittance. It was her custom, after returning from her morning visits among the women, to make a record in her diary (a large book of foolscap) of her success or her discouragements. Upon one occasion she wrote: "Thrice this week, I, an aged servant of Christ, have been turned



away from zenanas to which I went in all gentleness and kindness." But her courage never failed, for, meeting a rebuff at one house, she would go to another, where possibly she would find an entrance. She spoke of her work as an ice-bound vessel laboring to cut a passage through hard cold ice, with the chilly bergs of Mohammedanism and Hinduism towering on either side, but she added, "The crew are by no means downhearted. We have cheering signs of the warm breath of heaven, and the ice is melting in some of the zenanas."

Notwithstanding her abundant missionary labors, she found time to write. On winter mornings it was her habit to rise long before light, make her cup of cocoa, and devote that time to her literary work and personal correspondence. She sent home each year a new volume to add to her list of stories. But the greatest and crowning work of her life was to prepare a popular Christian literature for the women of India. She was probably the first Christian writer to issue religious story books in the languages of India. With wonderful ease she adopted the native modes of thought and language. Her books, tracts, and leaflets, of which she wrote over one hundred while in the country, were translated and circulated, and have become very popular and sought after by native women and by young girls in mission schools. These books were for native Christians and for those not Christians, for she made a study of the native character.

At the special request of the Christian Vernacu-



lar Education Society for India, she wrote a beautiful volume of explanations of the Parables of our Lord, called "Pearls of Wisdom," which for variety of subject and depth of thought surpasses all her other writings. It was published also in separate tracts, to enable even the very poorest native to purchase them. These have had an enormous circulation, as have had the English version also.

While millions of pages of the writings of this wonderfully gifted woman have been issued, the demand for them has only begun. India is without a Christian literature for women, and any one who in an attractive form breathes forth the truth on printed page, and scatters it abroad in the homes of India, is doing missionary work indeed. The Christian literature of this woman was the greatest legacy she could leave to India's daughters, and many will rise up and "call her blessed."

Of her work Bishop French wrote: "She is an example of an apostolic woman — one who, besides translations of her own works in the vernacular, for a whole year, in the absence of the missionary in charge, presided over a Christian native boarding-school of forty boys, and with incessant visits and hard and patient instructions ministered to the women of many Indian homes."

But the sunset of this beautiful life came. In October, 1893, while attending the opening of a church, she contracted a severe cold, from which she never recovered. Just at this time one of her associates fell ill, and not feeling well her-

self, Miss Tucker ministered to her, read aloud to her, watched her with tender solicitude, then passed from the warm sick-room out into the night air to her own "sunset" chamber. Worn and exhausted she too fell ill, and then was conveyed to Amritsir, where she was lovingly nursed and cared for by friends. But her work was done. So delighted was she at the prospect of "going home," that when told she could not recover, the physician said, "It raised her spirits and lowered her temperature."

"I long to go," and "Come quickly!" were the last words that fell from her lips. Thus she passed away as she wished, among the people she loved so well.

They carried her back to Batala, and laid her to rest December 5. The little village cemetery was nearly two miles from her home, and thither she was carried. She had made the request to be buried in native style without coffin. Wrapped in a sheet and laid upon a *charpay* (native bed), she was borne by the boys from the High School, to whom she had been such a friend. The day was beautiful, the road had been watered, and a great procession, consisting of missionaries, teachers, pupils, a large number of prominent natives, and last of all the women also, followed with mournful step. The bier was literally covered with flowers, the offering of love. Hymns were sung, — hymns of her own composition, — in which the whole procession joined.

And how touching the scene ! After the visitors had left the cemetery the women came from the city, heathen women, women she had visited and helped, women who would miss her visits and kind words, and into whose life some joy had come through Miss Tucker's ministration ; these came to wail and weep in true oriental manner. India women never lost a truer friend, and in all India history do we fail to find such a record as this beautiful woman of high birth, this cultivated Christian scholar, this celebrated English authoress, being carried to her last resting place in such Christian triumph. She will live in the hearts of the people of Northern India.

A movement is now agitated on the part of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society to perpetuate her memory by some suitable memorial at the scene of her labors in India. Miss Tucker was greatly interested in a new dispensary in Batala for women, and it is proposed to add a nursing ward to this dispensary, to be called the A. L. O. E. ward, and to provide an annual endowment for the beds, for which about ten thousand dollars will be appropriated. The Christian Literature Society for India has also determined to raise a special fund to republish her eighty-seven books for India readers, and to translate them into a much larger number of languages of India, with illustrations. A. L. O. E. will live in her books, and her Christian literature is her best memorial.

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